



**NINETEENTH-CENTURY EUROPEAN PAINTINGS
AT THE STERLING AND FRANCINE CLARK ART INSTITUTE**

VOLUME TWO

Edited by Sarah Lees

With an essay by Richard Rand
and technical reports by Sandra L. Webber

With contributions by Katharine J. Albert, Philippe Bordes, Dan Cohen,
Kathryn Calley Galitz, Alexis Goodin, Marc Gotlieb, John House,
Simon Kelly, Richard Kendall, Kathleen M. Morris, Leslie Hill Paisley,
Kelly Pask, Elizabeth A. Pergam, Kathryn A. Price, Mark A. Roglán,
James Rosenow, Zoë Samels, and Fronia E. Wissman

Nineteenth-Century European Paintings at the Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute is published with the assistance of the Getty Foundation and support from the National Endowment for the Arts.



The Getty Foundation



Produced by the Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute
225 South Street, Williamstown, Massachusetts 01267
www.clarkart.edu

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Production by The Production Department,
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Printed on 135 gsm Gardapat Kiara
Color separations and printing by Trifolio, Verona

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Distributed by Yale University Press, New Haven and London
P. O. Box 209040, New Haven, Connecticut 06520-9040
www.yalebooks.com/art

Printed and bound in Italy
10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute.

Nineteenth-century European paintings at the Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute / edited by Sarah Lees ; with an essay by Richard Rand and technical reports by Sandra L. Webber ; with contributions by Katharine J. Albert, Philippe Bordes, Dan Cohen, Kathryn Calley Galitz, Alexis Goodin, Marc Gotlieb, John House, Simon Kelly, Richard Kendall, Kathleen M. Morris, Leslie Hill Paisley, Kelly Pask, Elizabeth A. Pergam, Kathryn A. Price, Mark A. Rogl an, James Rosenow, Zo  Samels, Fronia E. Wissman.

volumes cm

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-1-935998-09-9 (clark hardcover : alk. paper) —

ISBN 978-0-300-17965-1 (yale hardcover : alk. paper)

1. Painting, European—19th century—Catalogs. 2. Painting—Massachusetts—Williamstown—Catalogs. 3. Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute—Catalogs. I. Lees, Sarah, editor of compilation. II. Rand, Richard. III. Webber, Sandra L. IV. Title. V. Title: 19th-century European paintings at the Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute.

ND457.S74 2012

759.9409'0340747441—dc23

2012030510

Details:

TITLE PAGE: Camille Pissarro, *The Louvre from the Pont Neuf* (cat. 253)

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PAGES 890–91: Sir Lawrence Alma-Tadema, *The Women of Amphis* (cat. 3)

4. Mary J. Morgan collection, sale, American Art Association, New York, 3–15 Mar. 1886, no. 51 (Lugt 45481); John Taylor Johnson collection, sale, Somerville Art Gallery, New York, 19–22 Dec. 1876, no. 32 (Lugt 36955).
5. Mills (1825–1910) was a banker, merchant, and philanthropist who made a fortune during the California Gold Rush.
6. Strahan 1879–80, vol. 2, pt. 7, pp. 115–16.
7. Zafran, in *Cincinnati–Washington–Elmira 1992–93*, p. 144.
8. Goupil Stock Books, book 3, p. 106, no. 2470. The number “2470” is written on the reverse of the panel in pencil.
9. In *Bilbao 2006–7*, p. 124, the work is listed as being purchased by Kennard in January 1867 for \$360, although this seems to conflict with the sale date to Knoedler in February 1867. It is also listed as being with Knoedler, New York, in 1870. No documentation for these facts is given.

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Oil on panel, 32.6 x 23.9 cm
 Lower right: ZAMACOIS. 70
 1955.900

A young black servant pauses during his housekeeping to declare his love to a white marble sculpture of a young lady. As if the bust of the woman had life, she coquettishly reacts to her swooning suitor by turning her head in the opposite direction, burying her cheek against her shoulder, and drawing an arm across her chest. Tempering the flirtation of the scene, a lush curtain is draped between the two figures as if to protect the modesty of the shy woman. In the background, a marble sculpture of a grinning, bearded man contemplates the romantic episode.

Made when Zamacois was twenty-nine, one year before his death, this painting reveals the artist's success as a painter of genre scenes, a subject he specialized in, having studied briefly with Federico de Madrazo (1815–1894) in Madrid, and—after moving to Paris in 1860—with the French artist Ernest Meissonier (1815–1891). In fact, no other Spanish painter before Zamacois had obtained a similar degree of success in Paris in creating these highly sought-after paintings that were popular during the Second Empire. Zamacois became an inspiration to many Spanish artists who subsequently moved to Paris to pursue their artistic careers.

Unlike most genre painters, Zamacois specialized in representing comical and satirical scenes. Although he favored the same sorts of settings in late seventeenth- and eighteenth-century palace interiors or sumptuously decorated apartments, the Basque painter moved away from depicting the sentimental or historical scenes found in other artists' work, preferring to focus almost exclusively on humorous themes. In fact, some of his most acclaimed paintings were done following this model.

Platonic Love testifies to the artist's vivid imagination, bringing to life two rigid marble sculptures and infusing the scene with comical romance. His accomplished technical skills are reflected in his ability to capture the characters' facial features and reproduce in detail every element that comprises the composition. Like many other genre painters of his time, Zamacois probably used authentic clothing and decorations, which he often owned and kept stored in his studio to ensure the accuracy of his portrayal. In this painting, the sculpture of the woman recalls the work of Albert-Ernest Carrier-Belleuse (1824–1887), although Zamacois clearly invented its pose for the purposes of this scene, while the servant's suit might be one of the numerous costumes that Zamacois owned, as documented in his 1872 studio sale.¹ This painting is not the only one in which Zamacois depicted a black person as the main character. At least one other such painting is known, a work that, based on its simple, descriptive title, may have had fewer comic overtones than *Platonic Love*. This work, entitled *A Black Servant (Un domestique noir)*, appeared in the Goupil Stock Books on 20 September 1869—dating the work to at least a year earlier than the Clark painting—and it was sold to Knoedler, New York, on 11 April 1870.²

All these characteristics were acknowledged by the French critics when *Platonic Love* was featured in the Parisian Salon of 1870 alongside another of Zamacois's genre scenes, *The Education of a Prince* (private collection). Although there were some dubious reactions from critics such as Henri Delaborde, who questioned whether these kinds of scenes were appropriate for paintings when a lithograph or a watercolor could achieve the same results, he also had qualified praise for the imaginative and satirical elements that characterized these scenes as well as for their fine technique, commenting that “these small scenes . . . are treated with a great deal of mocking finesse and sometimes with a profound sense of observation.”³ The critic B. de Mezin preferred *Platonic Love* over *The Education of a*



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Prince, underlining that “this small painting is almost a masterpiece. The good man is admirably drawn, well painted, well posed.”⁴ Most critics, however, focused their commentary on *The Education of a Prince*. Karl Bertrand praised it, remarking that “all these faces are admirably painted and their features, very pleasantly diversified, express all the nuances of ecstasy. . . . The details are the prettiest in the world, the finest and the most happily found.”⁵ Other writers, such as Théodore Duret, were far more critical. While noting that *The Edu-*

cation of a Prince “strongly attracts the crowd” as “red [attracts] bulls,”⁶ he ranked Zamacois among artists who “claim to have found something new, outside of the path opened by Meissonier and his imitators.”⁷ Castagnary similarly grouped Zamacois with artists who emulated Meissonier or Jean-Léon Gérôme, artists who were “anecdotal, thinking small and painting fine,” and whose work was so similar that it was difficult to distinguish one painter’s hand from the others.⁸

Platonic Love was quickly sold by the dealer

Adolphe Goupil, through whom Zamacois had sold many of his works since at least 1866. The painting is recorded in Goupil's inventory books on 7 April 1870 on consignment from the artist, and was purchased for two thousand francs sometime in the same month by Adolphe Beugniet, another dealer who is perhaps better known as a frame maker. A stamp for Beugniet's business at 10 rue Laffitte appears on the verso of the panel, indicating that the painting was in his possession and confirming what appears to be documented in Goupil's books. The sale price of two thousand francs was notable considering the size of the picture and that it depicted only one figure, a clear indication of the popularity of this type of image. This popularity is further evidenced by Goupil's August 1871 commission of a print after the painting, which was executed by Paul-Adolphe Rajon (1842/43–1888).⁹ After the painting appeared in the 1870 Salon and the print was commissioned the following year, the history of *Platonic Love* is unknown until its purchase in 1933 by Sterling Clark. MR

PROVENANCE The artist, sold to Goupil, 7 Apr. 1870; [Goupil, Paris, sold to Beugniet, Apr. 1870, as *L'amour platonique*];¹⁰ [Adolphe Beugniet, Paris, from 1870]; [Knoedler, Paris, sold to Clark, 15 June 1933]; Robert Sterling Clark (1933–55); Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, 1955.

EXHIBITIONS Paris 1870, no. 2976, as *L'amour platonique*; Williamstown 1993c, no cat.; Williamstown 1994b, pp. 36, 77, no. 40; Albuquerque–Dallas 2005–6, pp. 108–9, 355, nos. 7, 520, ill.; Bilbao 2006–7, pp. 51, 194–95, no. 51, ill.

REFERENCES Mezin 1870, p. 32; Ossorio y Bernard 1883–84, p. 707; Beruete 1926, p. 98; González and Montse Martí 1989, p. 250; Reyero 1993, pp. 131–32.

TECHNICAL REPORT The support is a dark-colored hardwood, possibly mahogany, 0.8 cm thick, with chamfered back edges 1.9 cm wide. The wood grain runs vertically, and the panel has a slightly wavy surface but is relatively in plane. A crack runs 3.2 cm up from the lower edge, located 8.3 cm from the lower left corner. The back of the panel, aside from the chamfers, has a rough canvas-like texture, and the entire back surface was painted reddish-brown. There are two partially legible stamps on the reverse, one for the color merchant Deforge Carpentier and one for the framer Adolphe Beugniet. The stamp of the French restorer Henri Helfer and the date 17 Mar. 1938 marks the last time the painting was cleaned. There is some frame and solvent abrasion in the paint. Traction cracks in the right background have been inpainted, and there are retouches in the chair upholstery and the dark areas of the drapery. Large passages of the floor have been overpainted, possibly to mask numerous traction

cracks. There are a few vertical stress cracks in the paint near the panel crack, as well as in the lower right quadrant, and age cracks in the white costume. The fluorescence of the varnish in ultraviolet light is moderately light, with reglazing areas evident. The surface is glossy and even in reflectance, but the repainted areas are cloudier than the original passages. In 2005, a layer of grime was removed and the varnish adjusted.

The ground is composed of several off-white layers, presumably commercially applied. There are small holes in the surface of all four corners, possibly indicating that a drawing was once tacked to the front for transfer. There is a charcoal and possibly black ink underdrawing, which can be seen at all four edges. Using infrared reflectography, detailed architectural and perspective lines can be seen running below the drapery and the figure. There are slight artist's changes in the position of the man's head and the wrist of the shirtsleeve. Shadows in infrared may also indicate changes in the figure on the pedestal, which may have begun as a larger, full-length nude, extending to the upper right of the final bust. There seems to be a brown paint intermediate sketch, visible at the edges of forms. The paint layer is thin and vehicular, with no impastos, and was applied in fluid strokes, with glazes and scumbles intermixed in the layers. Some traction cracks in the background show dark colors beneath the visible paint. The layering order suggests that the costume was painted before the drapery swags around the pedestal. The signature and date are executed in black ink.

1. Drouot 1872.
2. Goupil Stock Books, book 4, p. 164, no. 4450; and book 5, p. 46, no. 4450.
3. Delaborde 1870, p. 707: "ces menues scènes . . . sont traitées avec beaucoup de finesse narquoise et quelquefois avec un profond esprit d'observation."
4. Mezin 1870, p. 32: "[C]e petit tableau est presque un chef-d'oeuvre. Le bonhomme est admirablement dessiné, bien peint, bien campé."
5. Bertrand 1870, p. 300: "Tous ces visages sont admirablement peints, et les physionomies, très heureusement diversifiées, expriment toutes les nuances de l'extase. . . . Les détails sont les plus jolis du monde, les plus fin et les plus heureusement trouvés."
6. Duret 1870, p. 18: [*Gulliver* by Jehan-Georges Vibert and *The Education of a Prince*] "attirent fort la foule . . . comme . . . le rouge les taureaux."
7. Duret 1870, p. 17: "qui ont prétendu trouver quelque chose de nouveau, en dehors de la voie tracée par Meissonier et ses imitateurs."
8. Castagnary 1870, p. 423: "Tous les quatres anecdotiers, pensant menu et peignant fin."
9. Bilbao 2006–7, p. 194.
10. Goupil Stock Books, book 5, p. 73, no. 4879.